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**North Charleston Redistricting Public Hearing
Summary of Testimony**

Trident Technical College, The College Center, Building 920
April 7, 2011 6:30-8:30 p.m. scheduled

The public hearing began at 6:40 p.m. The Redistricting Subcommittee members present were: Senator McConnell, Senator Ford, Senator Hutto, Senator Malloy, and Senator Cleary. Senator L. Martin and Senator Shoopman were absent. The Senate Redistricting staff persons present were: Charlie Terreni, Debbie Hammond, Katherine Wells, and Laurie Traywick.

Senator McConnell introduced the members of the subcommittee and explained the redistricting process. He announced that this was the last of 10 public hearings across the state. He also explained the ground rules for this hearing, as for all, would be to ask each speaker to be clear, brief, and civil, so all persons would have the time to present their ideas and concerns clearly and concisely and that all positions would be given respect. He also asked speakers to let the subcommittee know if their remarks referred to Senate or Congressional redistricting concerns or to both.

1. Senator “Chip” Campsen, Senate District # 43, welcomed the subcommittee to the Charleston area. He told them that he was there to listen, and he thanked the subcommittee for their hearing in Charleston and also for all of the public hearings that have been held across the state in order to obtain public input on concerns dealing with redistricting.

2. Senator Mike Rose, Senate District #38, also welcomed the subcommittee. He said that the chairman of Dorchester County Council was going to present comments with which he agreed, and asked the subcommittee to remember that Dorchester, Charleston, and Berkeley counties are mostly urban areas with many common interests and that it was good for all of them to be together. He also said he was there to listen to the public input.

3. Kay Koonce, Charleston County Executive Committeewoman for the SC Democratic Party and also a lawyer who has volunteered in numerous voter participation and protection efforts over the years, thanked the subcommittee for demystifying the redistricting process with the Senate redistricting website. She wants the subcommittee to draw plans that are fair and will not be challenged in court, and believes the subcommittee should use population equality, compactness, contiguity, preserving political subdivisions, and consideration of communities of interest as guidelines. She is not in favor of the principle of protecting incumbents. She also asks that the redistricting plans under consideration be placed on the website, so that the public can have access to them and an opportunity for public input. She also wants the subcommittee to get as much public input as possible, citing an example when a precinct line was changed that had unintended consequences on an elderly and disabled population because public input was not obtained, and she urges the subcommittee to check with party leaders of both parties for continual input. She suggests that media markets should be a consideration when considering what forms a community of interest and mentioned a 2010 Colorado Law Review article for more information. She also wants the General Assembly to eventually considering letting a nonpartisan redistricting commission handle redistricting, since she believes that there are fewer lawsuits in states that use such a commission for redistricting.

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4. Susan Breslin, with the Charleston County Democratic Party, thanked the subcommittee for the public hearing and making the redistricting process so open with the Senate website. She encourages the subcommittee to follow the suggestions of the Post & Courier editorial and make districts more competitive, especially Senate districts, which she describes as very weird in shape. She wants Senate districts drawn more compact, and does not want the concerns to be over keeping the core of a district intact. With regard to Congressional Districts, she wants the counties to remain as intact as possible, because she sees a county as a community of interest. She also feels that splitting counties among congressional districts splits too many historical communities located all around Charleston County, especially several of the black communities. She feels this eviscerates the strength of the minority communities.

5. Angie Chumlee spoke next. She lives in Dorchester County and wants the subcommittee to consider the economic interests when considering communities of interest. She feels that when rural areas are not adequately represented, they suffer the economic consequences, such as some of the rural areas of Dorchester County that do not have access to water and sewer service or the town of Ridgeville, which has one fire station. She wants the subcommittee to remember the economic consequences when considering communities of interest.

6. Pete Anderson, a resident of Edisto Beach, spoke about the need for a resident Senator in Colleton County. He wants a senator who lives in Colleton County, who will know and understand Colleton County concerns, especially the tax burdens endured by the residents of Edisto Beach.

7. Larry Hargett, chairman of Dorchester County Council, spoke to the subcommittee and gave them a copy of his written remarks. In those he explains that sometimes counties benefit from being split among different Senate Districts, especially when different parts of a county have different interests. As an example, he uses Lower Dorchester County as an example of an area that is more urban and that he believes has more in common with some of the urban areas of Charleston County. He also uses Upper Dorchester County as an example of a more rural area, with different concerns from the more urban areas, and more common interests with rural areas in Berkeley County. He also mentions that the town of Summerville lies in both Dorchester and Berkeley counties, a change made since the last redistricting, and would not suffer from being split with different Senate districts, so long as Dorchester County had at least one senator who lived in or near Summerville. Mr. Hargett suggests that it makes sense to have Dorchester, Berkeley, and Charleston senators on the same county delegation, because of the common interests among these counties.

8. Rev. Dewitt Williams, a former SC Senator, spoke on the need to keep districts competitive and not make them too “safe”, which he believes leads to a “laissez faire” attitude among legislators.

9. Jonathan Hoffman spoke about the need to have competitive districts. He wants a redistricting plan that does not gerrymander based on political affiliations, and is a plan with comparatively equal sized compact districts, using existing political boundaries. He wants to know why the past plans have not done so. He also wants community interests to be considered.

10. Joseph Darby, First Vice-President of the Charleston branch of the NAACP, spoke of the need to have districts that will allow all citizens to fairly and equitably have their say on election day. He wants the subcommittee to remember that all citizens of SC include those who celebrate confederate heritage,

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those whose ancestors were slaves, and those who came to the US in the current wave of immigration. It includes prosperous Greenville County and impoverished Allendale County. He wants the Senate districts to reflect economic, cultural, and political well being for all people. He also wants the new Congressional District to give a little balance to our Congressional delegation so that those in Columbia and those in Washington would look more like all the people in SC.

11. Larry Kobrinsky told the subcommittee that, as a former candidate for the 1st Congressional District seat, he hopes that the new Congressional plan can have a district based in Charleston, Dorchester, and Berkeley counties, and one based in Horry County, because the current district is spread too much across the coastal area of the state. He wants the subcommittee to join him in his effort to challenge the §5 pre-clearance provisions of the VRA, because it is no longer applicable to the state. He believes we are not the same state that we were in the '50s and '60s, and he gave as examples the victory for Tim Scott for the 1st Congressional District seat and Nikki Haley for governor. He also gave to the subcommittee a copy of the US Congress and he wants them to remember the US Supreme Court decision in *Zell v. Miller*, where the court stated that the VRA does not trump the US Constitution and therefore there should be no racial gerrymandering. He wants a balanced congressional district and elections based on ideas and not on race. He points out the US' unique status in the world in that this is the country that has accepted immigrants from all over and treated them as individuals and not as different ethnic groups. He believes the existing 6th Congressional District is unconstitutional and he wishes he had brought a law suit about it. He wants the subcommittee to disregard what the DOJ may advise and instead restore local sovereignty.

12. Dr. Sharon Young thanked the subcommittee for the opportunity to be heard. She is a resident of Bonneau, SC, which is in Berkeley County and she is in one of the gerrymandered districts that have been previously referenced. She wants the subcommittee to remember about neighborhoods when districts are drawn because those are communities where children attend the same schools, they play at the same recreational centers and we are friends. She also wants the subcommittee to understand about the need for jobs in these communities, and grouping rural communities separately from urban communities makes sense, because their economic needs are not the same. She asks the subcommittee to draw districts that are compact, cohesive, and geographically local.

13. Derrick Reddick spoke next and apologized for arriving late and not having an opportunity to hear others. He apologized if what he said to the subcommittee had already been said. He believes culture and not race is what most people mean when they are speaking of different groups, because everyone is raised differently. He is concerned about the education of young people and wants districts drawn to get a Senator or a Congressman who will work with the people and not just visit and make speeches. He wants the subcommittee to understand how having a community center where basketball is offered to young people would be a way of keeping them out of trouble and he wants a senator who understands this and will help get one.

14. Representative Wendell Gilliard, House District #111, spoke on the need to listen to the people's voices and let them know their concerns have been heeded. He also wants the subcommittee, when considering the 7th Congressional District, to listen to the voices of the people. He feels that the fact that there are 6 Congressional Districts, with 5 represented by republicans and 1 by a democrat speaks for itself.

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15. Jane Pulling is from Pinopolis in Berkeley County. She wants the subcommittee to be aware that both political parties have critical information to share in the redistricting process because local parties have intimate knowledge of communities of interest, and urges them to seek out this knowledge. She also believes that the state critically needs a viable 2-party system and thinks that many of the ills that are state-wide could be solved if there was more balance in the legislature. Even though republicans are in charge of the redistricting process at the legislative and gubernatorial levels, she asks the subcommittee to consider the needs of those not formally represented. She reminds the subcommittee of the gubernatorial election and that the results of 52%-49% were not a mandate. She agrees with Rev. Williams comments and says that we no longer need gerrymandered districts in SC.

16. Gwendolyn Robinson, a resident of Mt. Pleasant, disagrees with earlier speakers who do not want to talk about race. She wants the subcommittee to be race conscious when drawing the district lines. She also wants there to be an awareness that we are all members of the state, all contributing members of society, and we all have needs and concerns. She wants the subcommittee to avoid partisanship, and to remember that what hurts one person hurts all and what is good for one person is usually good for all. She asks the subcommittee not to draw districts that eliminate those considerations of people of color, especially the economic considerations, because then it will be business as usual and to have progress we must correct some of the previous wrongs and move forward.

Senator McConnell reminded everyone that written comments would also be accepted and adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m.